

FARMERS MARKETS AND ROADSIDE STANDS FLOURISH IN IRAQ

Despite Locally Grown Products, Iraq Still Imports 85% of the Nation's Food Supply

(Dohuk, Iraq) -- Iraqis almost exclusively buy their farm fresh produce and vegetables at farmers markets and roadside stands.



Behind petroleum, agriculture is easily Iraq's second largest industry and the nation's largest employer. But after three decades of war, sanctions and Saddam Hussein's tyrannical regime, farmers are still

struggling to make ends meet.

"The government does not yet have a clear-cut agriculture policy whereby they can support and protect farmers. Local farmers who produce vegetables and fruit," said Mateen Doski, a retired teacher and current farmer. "There are no canning factories. There are no marketing policies."

Locally produced product is widely available in the marketplace but local farmers can't compete with produce that is being dumped into the Iraqi market from Iran, Syria and Turkey at below-market prices.

At a Farmers Market in Dohuk fruits and vegetables were compared for price.



"These potatoes came from Iran. This is a 28-pound bag that sells for \$3.33. The tomatoes are from Syria. Fifty-five pounds

of tomatoes sell for \$2," said Doski. "These onions are local to the area. Two pounds of onions cost 40-cents."



The next logical step in the rebirth of Iraqi agriculture is to have a national farm policy that supports local Iraqi farmers and helps them become profitable.



As soon as local farmers can earn a reasonable income, invest in fertilizers, upgrade their farm equipment, incorporate new technologies and afford the fuel to truck their products into the marketplace, then Iraq can stop importing more than 85% of their food and help stabilize their national economy.

Photos and story by Paul McKellips, U.S. Department of State, Public Affairs GO Team, on assignment in Iraq.

